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## LEAKING AT THE TOP

Ships leak at the bottom. Institutions leak at the top. With them the best rises and tends to escape unless properly conserved. The modern church as an institution is subject to this danger. It is losing young and vicarious idealists who are ready to sacrifice for the Cause of Jesus, but who believe that his Cause can better be served in some other institution than the church. And yet they are also children of a Mother who, they feel, cannot wisely employ them. They are our social workers, our playground directors, our municipal reformers, and practically all other leaders in the struggle for larger social good.

Ask these young men and women why they are not identified with some church and they will answer you frankly. They believe they can do more good in organizations which have more definitely practical purposes and demand no profession of religious belief.

This answer is not a protest against orthodoxy. Such men and women are found no more universally in "liberal" churches than in orthodox. Their self-imposed ostracism is born of something deeper than the unwillingness to subscribe to creeds. Their impulses are Christian, but theologically they are agnostics.



Why is the church losing these men and women ?

Partly because they have been told by preachers that they cannot accept science and be Christians.

Partly because the churches with which some of them are acquainted have been controlled by men without knowledge or sympathy with education, who prefer preachers who are theologically as narrow-minded as themselves.

Partly because they have never been taught to think their religion in terms of their best thinking. Therefore, they believe

themselves to be more out of touch with the church than they really are. They despair of its future because they do not understand its present.

Partly, one might almost say largely, because they are themselves spiritually indifferent. In many cases they are altruistic materialists. Religion they hold to be a survival of primitive days and to be subordinate to ethics. They hold that it is useless to preach the gospel to men with empty stomachs, and therefore prefer to help people get good housing and good jobs rather than a sustaining faith in God and immortality.



But whatever may be the reasons for the loss of these efficient workers, the churches should at least be as much interested in them as in the leaders across the seas. It has a mission at home to those that are neither dependent, defective, nor delinquent. Why should the church be indifferent to men and women simply because they are strong and influential? A religion or any phase of a religion which cannot satisfy the intellectual life of its time is as surely doomed as a religion which cannot master the conscience of its time. One does not need to know much history to see this.



What shall the church do to prevent the loss of these modern men and women?

For one thing, its teachers and preachers must live in today's thinking. Homiletical cleverness, oratorical persuasiveness, ecclesiastical authority will not avail with men and women whose eyes have once been used in a methodical search for truth. Such honesty may bring its possessor bitter experiences, misrepresentation, loss of position, but the honesty quite as truly as the blood of martyrs has been the seed of the living church.

Either Christianity will compel the assent of honest men of modern training, or it is doomed to become in America what it is in Europe: the patron and protégé of ignorance.



Great causes can be hindered by little men. In its zeal to save the world, let the church not forget to save its own saviors.